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ABSTRACT

This paper is part of a larger study on student disaffection with high school. It examines changes in student's attitudes towards school over the past 25 years and relates them to educational expectations. It considers how important high school students think their education is for getting a good job and for later life; how well they like school and the courses they take; and how likely they are to express negative attitudes about school and to engage in anti-social behavior The data is part of the larger Monitoring the Future Study, which examines changing attitudes and opinions of high school seniors. The trends noted in student enrollment, attitudes, and opinions include: (1) the proportion of high school students who expect to graduate from college has grown remarkably; (2) there is a growing competition for grades; (3) there is an increased awareness of relevance of education to student's occupational future; and (4) there is a growing dissatisfaction with school. Seniors who anticipated some postsecondary education were as likely as high school only groups to support anti-social behavior. Appendix One is "Student Attitude and Behavior Variables" and Appendix Two is "Data and Figures." (Contains 11 references.) (Author/JDM)

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Student Attitudes toward High School and Educational Expectations

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Introduction

This exploratory paper, part of a larger study of student disaffection in high school being conducted by the author and James Rosenbaum of Northwestern University, will examine changes in student's attitudes toward school over the past quarter century and relate them to educational expectations. How important do high school students think their education is for getting a good job and for later life? How well do they like school and the courses they take? How likely are they to express negative attitudes about school and to support or engage in anti-school behavior?

In his classic study, *Rebellion in a High School* (1964, pp. 5-6), Arthur Stinchcombe hypothesized that

> high school rebellion, and expressive alienation, occurs when future status is not clearly related to present performance. When a student realizes that he does not achieve status increment from improved current performance, current performance loses meaning. The student becomes hedonistic because he does not visualize long-run goals through current self-restraint. He reacts negatively to a conformity that offers nothing concrete…

Students who perceive performance in high school as helping them attain future status through work (or marriage) will tend to conform to its norms and expectations. Those who do not, will tend not to. "The perceived value of school depends on the school's perceived connection with success… The perceived lack of connection of school work to occupational success produces rebellion" (p.71).

When Stinchcombe wrote his book, high school graduation was regarded as the achievable standard required to get a good job and support a family (Boesel and Fredland 1999). However, the last quarter century has been an era of marked technological change, greatly increasing the labor market's demand for thinking skills. A key measure of this demand is the college premium -- the ratio of the earnings of college graduates to those of high school graduates. The college premium has increased markedly over the last several decades. So, today the principal way in which high school facilitates later occupational success is not in preparing students directly for the labor market, but in preparing them for college.

In general, then, it is anticipated that high school seniors who expect to get more education will express more positive attitudes toward school and conform more to its norms. Those who expect to graduate from a 4-year college will be more positive than those expecting some postsecondary education, but less than four years. Those expecting to graduate from high school but to get no postsecondary education will have the least positive – or the most negative – attitudes. Further, because the earnings of college graduates have increased relative to those of high school graduates, we anticipate that the attitudinal difference between prospective college graduates and prospective high school graduates (only) will increase over time. Along the same lines, we expect that students in college preparatory programs will express more positive attitudes than those in general or vocational programs and that these differences will also increase over time.

The paper first examines the changing attitudes and opinions of high school seniors; it then breaks the data down by postsecondary expectations and by high school program.

The Data

The study is based on 23 years of data from the *Monitoring the Future* survey. (See Bachman, Johnson, and O'Malley 1980). The *Monitoring* survey has been conducted each year since 1976 by the Institute for Survey Research at the University of Michigan. It is best known for the annual data it provides on drug and alcohol use by secondary school students, but it also contains valuable information on student attitudes, opinions, lifestyles, and experiences in school.

In conducting the survey, a three-stage sample design is used. First, geographic areas are selected as the primary sampling units. Then, one or more schools is selected within each geographic area; altogether about 125 schools are selected each year. Then students are selected within the school. High school seniors have been surveyed since 1976. In later years the Institute added samples of 8th and 10th graders.

Altogether about 15,000 seniors are sampled annually. All of them complete a common core questionnaire. Then subsamples of about 3000 each respond to five other questionnaires. Most of the questions examined in this paper come from the Core Questionnaire and from the first of the five questionnaires administered to subsamples.

Although the survey provides data for every year since 1976, to simplify analysis and presentation, I examined data at approximate five-year intervals -- 1976, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, and 1999 (the latest year available).

The great strength of the survey, in terms of the research in this paper, is that it contains information on student attitudes toward school and related behaviors, and that its questions, sampling, and survey methods have remained the same or similar since the survey began. Thus, year-to-year comparisons are possible.

One limitation of the survey is that it relies on student self-reports. While such reports are good sources of information on attitudes and many behaviors, they tend to be less accurate than other sources (e.g., student records) on variables such as the student's grades and his or her high school program. This is more a validity than a reliability problem, however. Though reports on variables such as grades or high school program may be subject to substantial error, relative estimates (e.g., those of one group vs. another or changes over time) tend to be better.

Another limitation is that the cross-sectional nature of the survey does not permit following individual respondents over time and thus limits the inferences that can be drawn about the causes of student behavior and attitudes or changes in them.

Nevertheless, *Monitoring the Future* is excellent at tracking changes in student attitudes and behavior over time, and it facilitates the testing of the hypotheses outlined in the introduction. The variables are listed and described in Appendix 1. Data and figures are

found in Appendix 2. Differences reported in this paper are statistically significant at the p.<.05 level, unless otherwise noted.

Trends in Student Enrollments, Attitudes, and Opinions

Increasing Emphasis on Academics

Consistent with the increased labor market demand for thinking skills, the proportion of high school students who expect to graduate from college, either two-year or 4-year, has grown remarkably. This tendency has become so predominant that "college for all" has become the norm among high-school youth (Rosenbaum 1998). For example, a survey by the Public Agenda Foundation found that 96% of high school seniors intended to go to "college," meaning either a two-year or a four-year college (see Stanfield 1997). Similarly, the National Center Education Statistics (1995, Table 177) found that 95 percent of seniors had such expectations. (In fact, smaller proportions attend college, and fewer still graduate from them, but here we are concerned with perceptions, plans, and expectations, since these, rather than eventual outcomes, are what shape present behavior.)

Data from *Monitoring the Future* reflect this trend. Between 1976 and 1999, the proportion of high school seniors saying that they "definitely" expected to graduate from a 4-year college doubled, increasing from 27 percent to 55 percent (Figure 1). More remarkable (though less evident in the figure), the proportion expecting to attend graduate school increased even more, in relative terms. The percentage of seniors expecting to do so more than doubled, from 8 percent in 1976 to 20 percent in 1999. The proportion of seniors expecting to complete two-year college also rose, but less rapidly, while the proportion expecting to enroll in postsecondary vocational education did not change significantly.

As college expectations have become prevalent, enrollments in high school academic programs have increased over time, while enrollments in general and vocational programs have declined (Figure 2). Between 1976 and 1999, reported participation in academic programs rose from 42 percent of seniors to 56 percent. Participation in vocational education dropped from 16 percent to 9 percent, while enrollment in general education programs declined from 32 percent to 28 percent.

In this major shift toward academics, planning for college has become more important in the student status system, weighing almost as heavily as being a good athlete. The *Monitoring* survey asked seniors how important each of seven elements was for status in their school (see tabular data for Figure 3). In 1976, being a good athlete, being a leader in student activities, and getting good grades drew the highest proportions of "important" responses (52 percent, 45 percent, and 43 percent respectively). By 1999 those proportions had not changed much, but a new factor -- planning on graduating from college -- had become much more pronounced. The proportion of seniors giving this response increased by almost two thirds, from 30 percent to 48 percent, more rapidly than any other status factor over this period. (Figure 3 shows the changes in the two status factors that showed the largest relative increase between 1976 and 1999 – planning on college and having a nice car.) Thus, academic considerations -- getting good grades

and planning on college -- were both prominent among the factors in student status in 1999.

Consistent with increased college expectations and the weight of academics in the student status system, there is evidence of greater competition for grades in the *Monitoring* data, though not as much as might be expected (Figure 4). The proportion of seniors saying that there was "quite a bit" or "a great deal" of competition increased from 35 per cent in 1976 to 42 percent in 1995, before declining slightly to 40 percent in 1999.

The seniors' self-reported high school grades also increased over this period. Most marked was the growth in the proportion saying that they averaged A's or A-minuses (Figure 5). That proportion remained at about 20 percent from 1976 to 1990, then rose to around 30 percent in 1995 and 1999. The increase is not due to changes in survey questions or methodology, which remained constant over the period. It is possible that the increased emphasis on academics pressured students to report higher grades than they actually received. Grade inflation is also a possibility -- students intent on going to college and their parents may be exerting more pressure on teachers to give higher grades, even though performance remains unchanged. It is also possible that students are performing better and deserve the improved grades they say they're getting.

Changes in Student Outlook, Attitudes, and Behaviors

Relevance of Education to the Future

High school seniors seem to be aware of the increasing relevance of education to their occupational futures (Figure 6). In 1976, some 48 percent agreed that "doing well at school is important for getting a good job"; that proportion increased to 62 percent in 1990, before declining slightly in 1995. At the same time, there was growing uneasiness among seniors about whether they were getting the education necessary for the jobs they wanted. Asked to what extent they thought that their education would prevent them from getting the kind of work they would like to have, a little over one fifth (22 percent) said "a lot" in 1976; that proportion increased to one third (33 percent) in 1999. Moreover, the seniors became less inclined over this period to think that "the things [they were] learning in school" were important for their later lives. The proportion saying that these things were "quite important" or "very important" decreased from 52 percent in 1980 to 40 percent in 1999. In short, while high school seniors today are more aware of the relevance of education to their future work prospects, they are also more likely to think that their own education and the things they are learning are inadequate.

Growing Disaffection with School

Related to these perceptions is an increasing disaffection with school. Figure 7 shows that from 1976 to 1999 there were declines in the proportions of seniors who felt the schoolwork they were assigned was meaningful and important ("often" or "almost always"), who indicated that their courses were "quite interesting" or "very exciting and stimulating," who said they liked school "very much" or "quite a lot," and who felt that school had been enjoyable. The mean relative decline in these responses from 1976 to

1999 was almost one-fourth. (A greater relative decline -- a mean of 29 percent -- occurred between 1980 and 1999.)

Increasing Support for Anti-School Behavior

Within this context of growing disaffection, there has been an increase in student support for anti-school behavior (Figure 8). The proportions reporting such support are relatively small -- ranging from about 5 percent to 20 percent -- but these tendencies may reflect and contribute to negative attitudes on the part of a larger body of students. Between 1976 and 1999 the proportion of seniors saying that their friends would "like it" or "like it very much" if they cheated on a test increased from 4 percent to 6 percent. The proportion saying that most of the students in their classes would "like it" or "like it very much" if they intentionally did things to make their teachers angry increased from 14 percent to 19 percent. Similarly, the proportion saying that their friends "often" or "always" encouraged them to do things the teachers wouldn't like grew from 6 percent to 11 percent.

Given the growing support for anti-school behavior, it is not surprising that the proportion of seniors who said they had intentionally damaged school property in the last year rose from 12 percent to 15 percent (Figure 9). While the percentage point rise is not great, it represents an increase of one-fourth in such reports, a growth from an estimated 321,000 to 400,000 seniors who damaged schools in a year.

The survey data also show that high school seniors are less likely to see counselors than in earlier years (Figure 10). In 1976, only 12 percent of seniors had not seen a counselor individually in the most recent school year. By 1999, that figure had more than doubled, to 28 percent. There is some evidence [reference] that counselors today have to spend more time on testing and assessment than they did before. If so (and assuming a constant ratio of counselors to students), that would leave less counselor time for each student, on average. There may be other factors in the changes counselor/student contact, as well. Is this decline in contact a factor in the slow slide of student attitudes about school into negativity? The survey data are limited in their ability to address this question, but it is worth investigating.

Student Attitudes, Opinions, and Behavior by Postsecondary Plans

Based on the general hypotheses above, we would expect students who plan on attending a 4-year college and/or graduate school to be more likely than those who anticipate no education after high school

- to consider their education important to their futures,
- to find their courses meaningful, and
- to like high school

and to be less likely

- to support anti-school behavior and
- to engage in anti-school behavior.

Students who plan on getting some postsecondary education, but less than a 4-year degree, would fall in between.

Further, as the relative value of a high school diploma declines, we would anticipate an increase over time in the difference between the attitudes and behaviors of prospective college graduates and those who expect to graduate from high school but to get no further education. .

Monitoring data enable us to test these hypotheses. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their plans after high school (vocational institute, military service, 2-year college, 4-year college, graduate school). Response categories formed a 4-point scale: definitely not, probably not, probably will, definitely will. To provide a clear measure of intentions, the 4-year college category included those who said they would "definitely" graduate from a 4-year college and also those who would "definitely" attend graduate school. The less-than-4-year college category included those who said they would "definitely" graduate from a two-year college, graduate from a vocational/technical institute, or enter military service (which entails occupational training). As there was no option for high school graduate only, this category included those students those who said they would "definitely not" or "probably not" pursue any of the postsecondary options offered. In 1976, 13 percent fell in this category. By 1999, the push toward college had become so strong that only 3 percent responded in this way. The number of such respondents in the 1999 survey is small (63) and the sampling errors are correspondingly large. Even so, many of the observed differences are so large that they are statistically significant.

Relevance of Education to the Future

The *Monitoring* data from two questions about the importance of their education for the future largely support both hypotheses. In 1976 college-bound seniors were more likely to say that doing well at school was important for getting a good job than were prospective high school graduates (Figure 11). They were also more likely to say that what they were learning at school would be important in later life (Figure 13). Both of these differences increased significantly over time. On the other hand, student responses to the question about whether their education would prevent them from getting the kind of work they would like run counter to the hypotheses (Figure 12). In 1976, roughly similar proportions of students in each group said that it would; by 1999, college-bound seniors were much more likely than high school graduates to say so.

Disaffection with School

The data on student attitudes and opinions toward school largely support the hypotheses, too. In 1976 college prospects were the most likely to consider their schoolwork meaningful and important, followed by those expecting some postsecondary education and then by prospective high school graduates (Figure 14). By 1999, the order was the same, though students in all three groups were less likely to find schoolwork meaningful. The gap between prospective college graduates and the high-school-only group had increased from 15 to 22 percentage points. Also, in 1976, college-bound students tended

to like school more than prospective high school graduates, with the students who anticipated some postsecondary education falling in between (Figure 16). By 1999, students in each group tended to like school less. Though the percentage-point decreases for the three groups were similar, the high-school-only group showed a relative decline of 60 percent, the some-postsecondary group 44 percent, and the 4-year college prospects 35 percent. Further, following the dominant pattern, in both years prospective college graduates, those expecting some postsecondary education, and future high school graduates, in that order, agreed that school had been enjoyable (Figure 17). Again, the positive opinions of the high-school-only group dropped the most between 1976 and 1999, in this case from 31 percent to a mere 5 percent -- only 1 in 20 said that they had enjoyed school.

Data on one of these four items supported only the first hypothesis. Four-year college prospects were more likely than future high school graduates to consider their courses interesting and exciting in both years (Figure 15). However, the percentage of college-bound students thinking this declined significantly between 1976 and 1999, while the percentage of prospective high school students remained essentially unchanged.

By and large, then, the students expecting to go to college tended to have the most positive attitudes toward school, and those expecting only to graduate from high school had the least. Moreover, while members of all these groups tended to have less positive attitudes in 1999 than in 1976, the prospective high school graduates usually showed the greatest relative declines. As anticipated, the responses of those expecting some postsecondary education, but less than four years, usually fell in between the other two groups.

Support for Anti-school Behavior

The *Monitoring* data on student support for anti-school behavior (support for cheating, support for making teachers angry, and encouragement to do things teachers wouldn't like) are consistent with the hypotheses in some ways but not in others (Figures 18-20). In 1976, contrary to expectations, none of the differences among the three groups was statistically significant, though most of the small estimated differences were in the expected direction. However, by 1999, consistent with expectations, students in the high-school-only group were significantly more likely than those in the college-bound group to say that their classmates would like it if they cheated on a test or if they made teachers angry and to say that their friends encouraged them to do things teachers wouldn't like. From 16 percent to 24 percent of the prospective high school graduates held these views in 1999, depending on the question.

The surprising finding is that on two of these three items (cheating, making teachers angry), the affirmative responses of students expecting to get some education after high school, but less than four years increased as much as those of the prospective high school graduates. In 1999, about one sixth of the future "some-postsecondary" group supported these forms of anti-school behavior.

Further, the some-postsecondary group is the only one showing a significant increase in self-reports of damage to the school (Figure 21). While the proportion of students in the

other two groups remained about the same between 1976 and 1999, the proportion in this group almost doubled, from 11 percent to 19 percent. Almost one in five of these students reported having damaged school property on purpose in the most recent 12 months.

Why the seniors expecting some education after high school should show increases of this size in anti-school attitudes and behavior is unclear. It is probable that in 1999 the group contained many students who in 1976 would have fallen in the high-school-only category. But students in the high school category in 1976 were not significantly more likely than college prospects to give anti-school responses. Other explanations will be explored in future analyses.

Student Attitudes and Behavior by High School Program

Students' educational plans for the future affect their decisions about high school curricular programs. These programs, in turn, are a powerful factor in the benefits a student typically receives in high school, in access to college, and in the labor market. As a rule, students in academic programs get more of these present and future benefits than do students in general and vocational programs (for example, see Rosenbaum 1977, Oakes 1985, Gamoran 1989). Moreover, as the years of education needed for effective participation in the economy increase, the advantage of students in programs that prepare them for college continues to grow.

We would therefore expect high school seniors in academic programs to be more likely than those in vocational and general programs

- to consider their education important to their futures,
- to find their courses meaningful, and
- to like high school

and to be less likely

- to provide social support for anti-school behavior; and
- to engage in a particular anti-school activity -- damaging school property.

Because the evidence suggests that students outside the academic mainstream -- those in the vocational and general tracks -- are increasingly losing out in the competition for present and future benefits, we would also expect their attitudes and opinions to be moving in a negative direction more rapidly than those of academic students.

Let us see what the *Monitoring* data say about these issues. At the outset, it should be noted that the data on the opinions, attitudes, and behavior of general track students often did not support the hypotheses and were difficult to interpret. To simplify discussion, therefore, the following sections will focus on comparisons between academic and vocational students.

Relevance of Education to the Future

Contrary to expectations, in 1976 there were no significant differences between academic and vocational students in thinking that doing well at school is important for getting a good job, that their education would prevent them from getting the kind of work they wanted, or that the things learned at school were important for later life (Figures 22-24).

By 1999, the patterns had changed. As expected, vocational students were less likely than academic students to think that doing well at school was important for getting a good job and more likely to think their education would prevent them from getting the kind of work they wanted (Figures 22-23). However, there was no difference between the groups in 1999 in the tendency to regard the things they were learning as important for later life (Figure 24).

As a rule, vocational students in 1976 tended to have a rather benign view of the relevance of their education to their futures. By 1999, however, their opinions were much less positive on two key variables (Figures 22, 23). Particularly striking is the fact that the percentage of vocational students who thought their education would prevent them from getting the kind of work they wanted more than doubled, from 19 percent to 44 percent.

Disaffection with School

Differences between academic and vocational students on the four attitudinal variables (schoolwork meaningful, courses interesting or exciting, respondent likes school, and school has been enjoyable) in the two years (1776, 1999) were in the hypothesized direction in 7 of 8 comparisons, but significant in only 2 (Figures 25-28). In both years, academic students were much more likely than vocational students to say that they liked school. Changes in the attitudes over time did not consistently support the change hypothesis.

Support for Anti-School Behavior

The patterns of support for anti-school behavior are similar to those of the students' future orientations. In 1976, an estimated 7 percent of vocational students and 3 percent of academic students said that their classmates would "like it" or "like it a lot" if they cheated on a test (Figure 29). By 1999, 16 percent of vocational students and 4 percent of academic students responded in this way. Also, in 1976, 8 percent of vocational students and 5 percent of academic students said that friends encouraged them to do things that teachers wouldn't like (Figure 31). By 1999, 13 percent of vocational students and 6 percent of academic students responded in this way. The differences in 1976 were not significant; those in 1999 were. In both years the data suggest ($p.<.10$) that vocational students were more likely than academic students to say that their classmates would like it if they made teachers angry (Figure 30); however, there was not much change over time.

As regards damage to property, in 1976, 14 percent of vocational students and 10 percent of academic students said they had intentionally damaged school property in the last 12

months (Figure 32). In 1999, 21 percent of vocational students and 12 percent of academic students said so.

Changes in the Status of Vocational Education

The data above show that in 1976, differences between academic and vocational students in future outlook, support for anti-school behavior, and damage to school property were muted. By 1999, the differences were more pronounced: Vocational students were less likely than academic students to say that doing well at school was important for getting a good job and more likely to say that their education would prevent them from getting the work they wanted, that their classmates would like it if they cheated, that their friends encouraged them to do things teachers wouldn't like, and that they had damaged school property in the last year.

Some historical context may help explain these changes. In 1976, the nation's economy was in the doldrums following the 1973 oil crisis. Real earnings and the college premium were falling. The earnings of high school graduates, including vocational completers, were rising relative to those of college graduates. Critics of the society's emphasis on college began to write about a crisis of "overeducation" and to advocate greater attention to high school students' acquiring practical work skills through programs such as vocational education (Freeman 1976). The media began to talk about college graduates flipping hamburgers and plumbers making good money. In this context, vocational students could feel pretty good about their programs and their schoolwork.

However, the relatively low college premium proved to be a temporary phenomenon. By the mid-1980s it was rising rapidly, reflecting the increasing demand for thinking skills. High college premiums persisted into the 21st century. A college education, and along with it, high school preparation for college, came to be valued more than ever.

On the other hand, the labor market outcomes of vocational graduates were not much better than those of general education graduates (Boesel and McFarland 1994). In terms of these outcomes, vocational completers were average high school graduates, and high school graduates were not doing well. Vocational enrollments declined steadily in the 1980s and 1990s. By 1994, the *National Assessment of Vocational Education* reported an increase in the marginalization and stigmatization of vocational programs. Many were outdated, and many had come to be regarded as dumping grounds for students whom other programs didn't want. Thus the vocational students' growing perception in the *Monitoring* data that their education would be an obstacle to getting the kind of work they'd like can be readily understood, as can their increasing support for, and participation in, anti-school behavior.

Summary and Conclusion

Based on Stinchcombe's work, the paper hypothesized that because of the strong relation between years of education and economic success, the more education high school students anticipated getting, the better they would like school – specifically that high school seniors planning to graduate from college would express more positive attitudes than those planning to get just some postsecondary education, and that prospective high

school graduates planning no further education would be the least positive about school. As a corollary, it was expected that seniors preparing for college in academic programs would be more positive than those in general and vocational programs, which typically assume that high school graduation will be the highest education level.

Further, it was expected that as the economy's demand for thinking skills and the college premium increased, the attitudinal gap between those with higher and lower levels of education would grow – that the difference between college-bound seniors and high school graduates (only) and between academic students and general or vocational students would increase over time.

The data from *Monitoring the Future* tended to support these hypotheses, but the results were not fully consistent, and the divergences are interesting. With some exceptions, in both 1976 and 1999 college-bound students were more likely than prospective high school graduates to regard their education as relevant to the future and have positive attitudes toward school, and less likely to support anti-school behavior. (The last tendency was only suggested by the data in 1976.) However, it was surprising to find that in 1999 seniors expecting just some postsecondary education were as likely as the high-school-only group to support anti-school behavior in 2 of 3 measures and that they were the most likely to report having damaged school property.

In comparing the responses of students in academic, general, and vocational programs, the analysis usually found the expected patterns in future orientation, support for anti-school behavior, and damage to school property in 1999 for academic and vocational students, but not general education students. The data on student attitudes toward their courses, etc. were in the expected direction, but usually not significant. As expected, the differences between academic and vocational students were greater in 1999 than in 1976. However, the inter-group differences were slight and usually nonsignificant at the earlier point in time. In 1976 there was a rough attitudinal parity among the groups. A suggested reason for this parity is that at the time new college graduates were not doing well in the labor market, and the prospects of high school vocational graduates were relative bright.

Given today's labor market and the college-for-all norm, it seems clear that there has been a growth of negative sentiment about high school among groups of students who are losing out in the competition for present and future benefits, especially those expecting no education after high school and those in vocational programs. At the same time, other groups of students have not been immune to this negative shift. In 1999 college-bound students were more likely than prospective high school graduates to say that their education would prevent them from getting work that they liked, and those expecting some postsecondary education were among the most likely to support and engage in anti-school behavior.

More broadly, there has been a decline in positive attitudes and an increase in negative attitudes and (one) negative behavior among high school seniors in general. Although the left-out groups tend to show more of this shift, all the groups examined here participated in it. No doubt many things have contributed to this change. Future research efforts to explain it will certainly be worthwhile.

Finally, it should be emphasized again that the research reflected in this paper is exploratory. It is best to regard the findings first of all as descriptive. The data are generally consistent with a leading hypothesis about high school rebellion, but the fact that they support it doesn't definitively explain the observations. Other factors are no doubt involved. For example, the attitudinal differences by high school program can probably be explained mostly by characteristics of the students selected or self-selected into the programs. Future research in this project will pay more attention to other such possible explanations and to related variables.

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Appendix 1

Student Attitude and Behavior Variables
Monitoring the Future, 1976-1999

Relevance of school to future

"Doing well in school is important for getting a good job."
(5-point scale: Disagree-Agree)

"To what extent do you think the things listed below will prevent you from getting the kind of work you would like to have? .... Your education? (3-point scale: Not at all - A lot)

"How important do you think the things you are learning in school are going to be for your later life?" (5-point scale: Not at all important - Very important)

Attitudes toward and opinions about school

"Some people like school very much. Others don't. How do you feel about going to school? (5-point scale: "I like school very much" - "I don't like school at all")

"How often do you feel that the school work you are assigned is meaningful and important?" (5-point scale: Never-Almost always)

"How interesting are most of your courses to you?" (5-point scale:
5. Very exciting and stimulating
4. Quite interesting
3. Fairly interesting
2. Slightly dull
1. Very dull)

"Going to school has been an enjoyable experience for me."
(5-point scale: Disagree-Agree,)

"How satisfied are you with...Your educational experiences?"
(7-point scale: Completely dissatisfied - Completely satisfied)

"How good or bad a job is being done for the country as a whole by... the nation's public schools?" (5-point scale: Very poor-Very good)

Support for anti-school behavior

"How do you think most of the students in your classes would feel if you cheated on a test?" (5-point scale: Like-Dislike)

"How do you think most of the students in your classes would feel if you intentionally did things to make your teachers angry?" (5-point scale: Like-dislike)

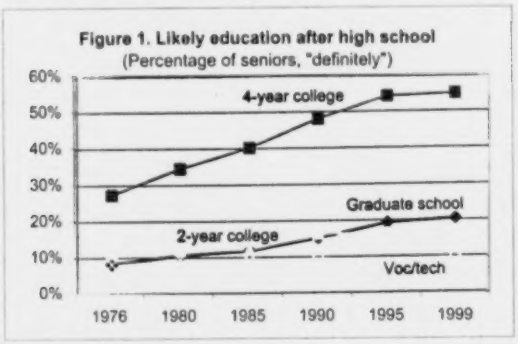
"How often do you find that your friends encourage you to do things which your teachers wouldn't like?" (5-point scale: Never-Almost always)

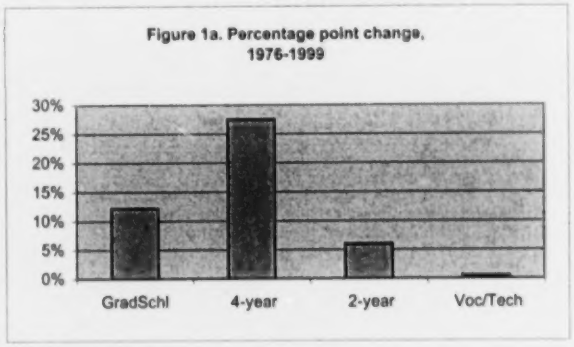
Anti-school behavior

"In the last 12 months, how often did you … intentionally damage school property?"

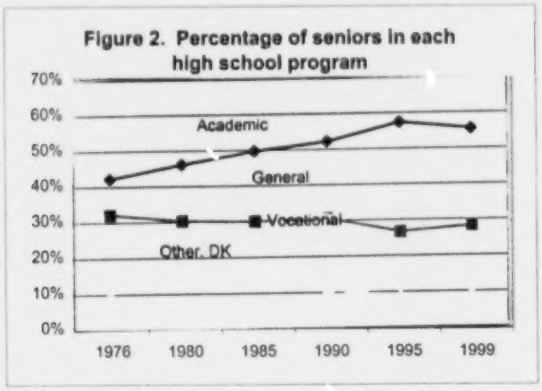
Appendix 2
Data and Figures

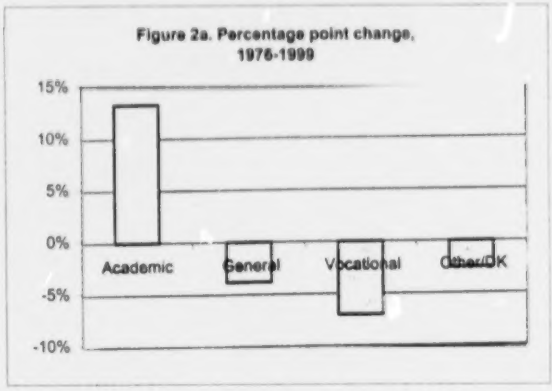
Characteristics of High School Seniors, 1976-1992	1976	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	% point change 76-99	p<.05 *	Relative change 76-99
Likely education after HS (definitely)									
Attend graduate school	0.08	0.11	0.12	0.15	0.19	0.20	0.12	*	1.49
Graduate from 4-year college	0.27	0.35	0.40	0.48	0.54	0.55	0.28	*	1.00
Graduate from 2-year college	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.16	0.17	0.17	0.06	*	0.54
Attend technical/vocational school	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.08	0.09	0.00		0.06



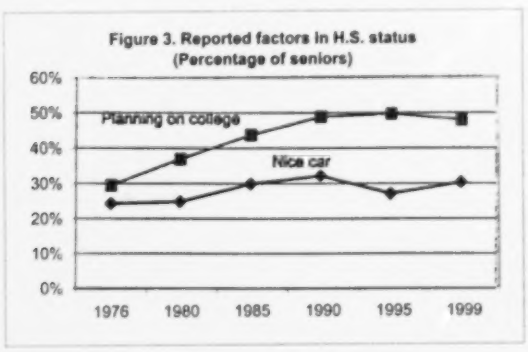


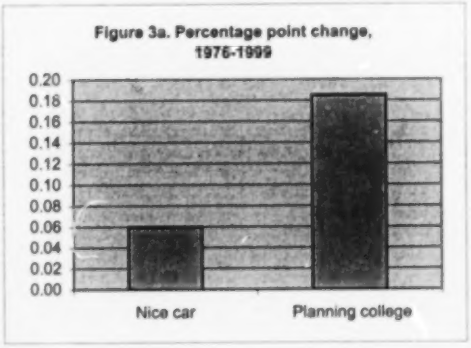
High school program									
Academic	0.42	0.46	0.50	0.52	0.57	0.56	0.13	*	0.32
General	0.32	0.30	0.30	0.31	0.27	0.28	-0.04	*	-0.12
Vocational	0.16	0.15	0.14	0.11	0.09	0.09	-0.07	*	-0.43
Other, DK	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	-0.03	*	-0.27



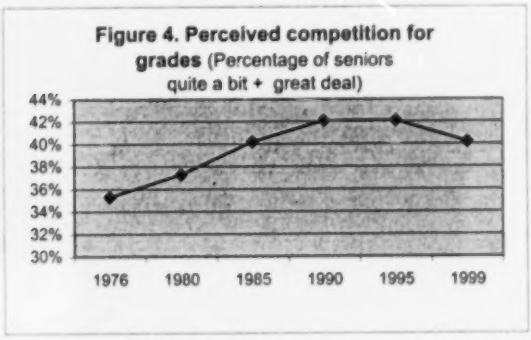


	1976	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	% point change 76-99	p<.05 *	Relative change 76-99
How important for status in your school? (great+very great importance)									
Right family	0.30	0.33	0.37	0.34	0.33	0.34	0.05	*	0.15
Leader in activities	0.45	0.42	0.41	0.42	0.42	0.41	-0.04	*	-0.09
Good grades	0.43	0.48	0.49	0.48	0.46	0.45	0.02	*	0.05
Good athlete	0.52	0.53	0.49	0.55	0.57	0.53	0.01		0.02
Intellectual	0.23	0.24	0.25	0.29	0.27	0.28	0.04	*	0.18
Nice car	0.24	0.25	0.30	0.32	0.27	0.30	0.06	*	0.25
Planning on college	0.30	0.37	0.44	0.49	0.50	0.48	0.19	*	0.63

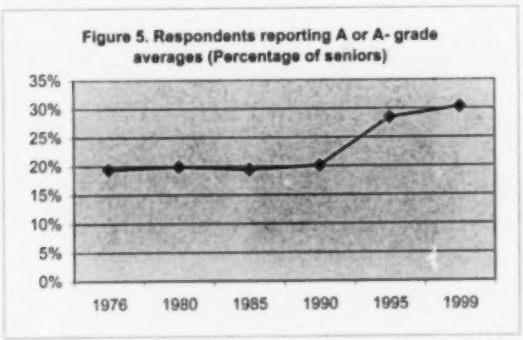




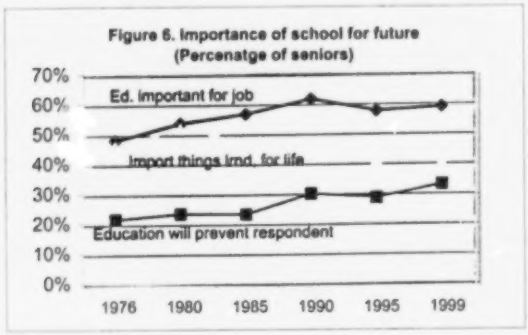
Competition for grades (quite a bit+a great deal)	0.35	0.37	0.40	0.42	0.42	0.40	0.05	*	0.14



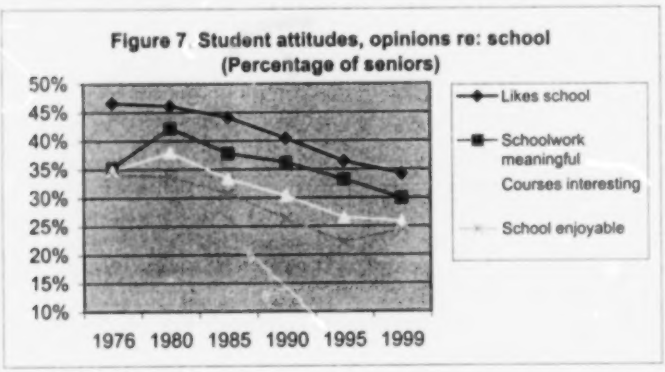
	1976	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	% point change 76-99	p<.05 *	Relative change 76-99
Respondents' self-reported grades (A or A-)	0.19	0.20	0.19	0.20	0.29	0.30	0.11	*	0.56



Doing well/school important getting good job (agree)	0.48	0.54	0.57	0.62	0.58	0.59	0.11	*	0.22
Yr ed will prevent you from getting work you like	0.22	0.24	0.24	0.30	0.29	0.33	0.11	*	0.51
Importance of things yr learning for later life (quite+very)	0.46	0.52	0.48	0.44	0.41	0.40	-0.06	*	-0.13



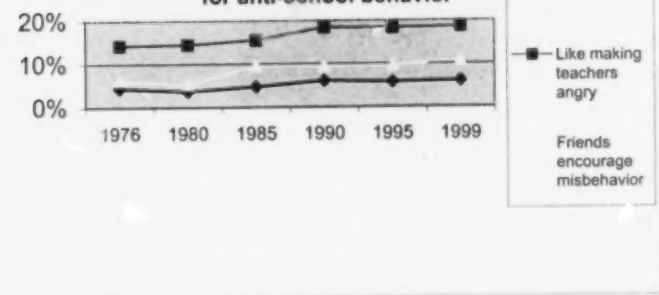
Schoolwork meaningful, important (often+almost always)	0.35	0.42	0.38	0.36	0.33	0.30	-0.05	*	-0.15
How interesting courses? (quite interesting+very exciting)	0.35	0.38	0.33	0.30	0.27	0.26	-0.09	*	-0.26
Respondent likes school (very much+a lot)	0.47	0.46	0.44	0.40	0.36	0.34	-0.12	*	-0.27
School has been enjoyable (agree)	0.34	0.34	0.31	0.26	0.22	0.24	-0.10	*	-0.28



Differences 1980-99	% pt.	relative
meaningful	0.12	0.29
interesting	0.12	0.32
likes school	0.12	0.26
enjoyable	0.09	0.28
		1.14
mean %		0.29

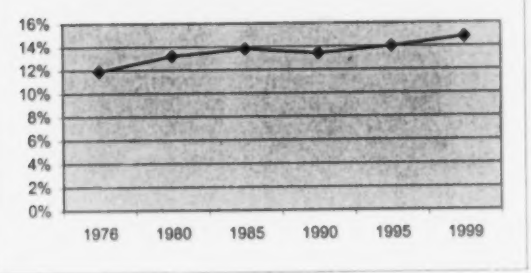
	1976	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	% point change 76-99	p<.05 *	Relative change 76-99
Classmates' feelings if you cheat (like+like very much)	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.02	*	0.39
Classmates' feelings if make Ts angry like+very much)	0.14	0.15	0.16	0.18	0.18	0.19	0.04	*	0.30
Friends encourage things Ts don't like (often+always)	0.06	0.05	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.05	*	0.73

Figure 8. Percentage of seniors reporting for anti-school behavior



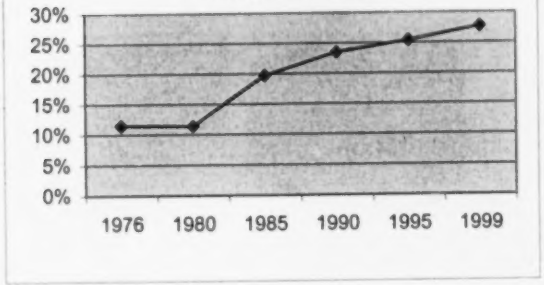
R damaged school property in last 12 months	0.12	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.14	0.15	0.03	*	0.24

Figure 9. Percentage of seniors saying they damaged school property in last 12 months



	1976	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	% point change 76-99	p<.05 *	Relative change 76-99
Have not seen counselor individually this school year	0.12	0.11	0.20	0.24	0.25	0.28	0.16	*	1.41

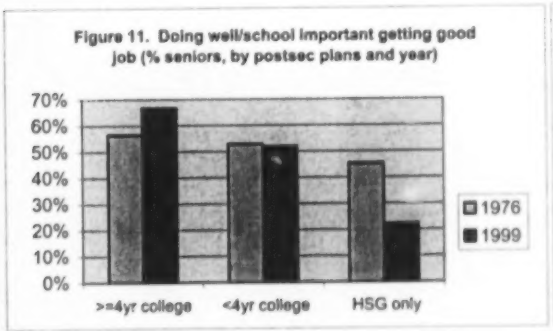
Figure 10. Percentage of seniors not seeing counselor individually in school year

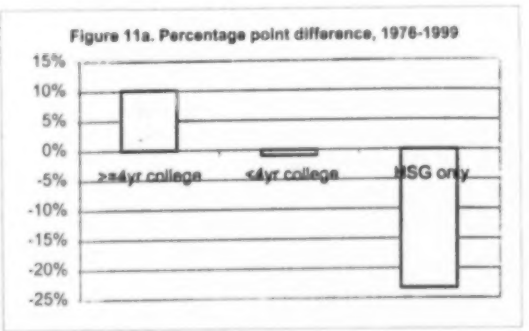


Crosstabs: Senior characteristics by postsecondary plans and year (1976, 1999)

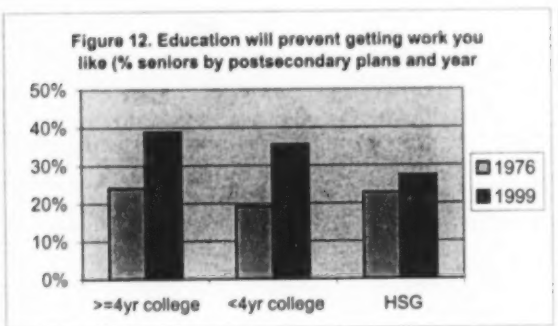
Shaded areas: p<.05

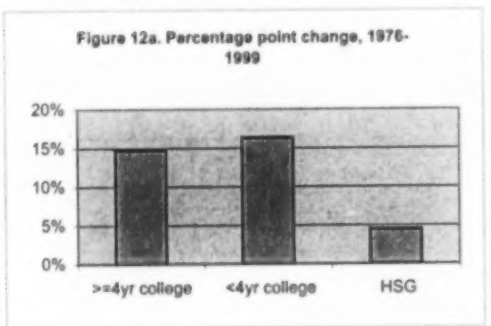
		>=4yr coll	<4yr coll	HSG only
Doing well/school important getting good job (agree)	**1976**	0.56	0.53	0.45
	1999	0.67	0.52	0.22
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		0.10	-0.01	-0.23
Relative difference, 1976-1999		0.18	-0.02	-0.51



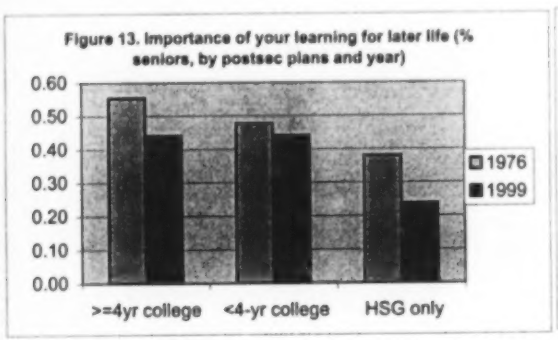


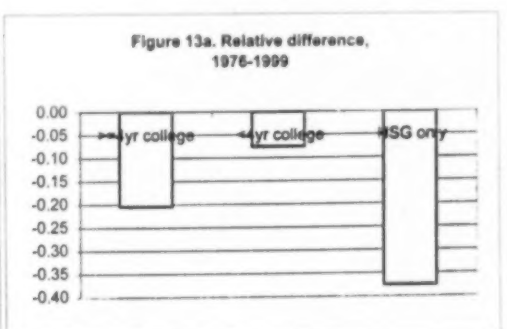
Your education will prevent your getting work you like	**1976**	0.24	0.19	0.23
	1999	0.39	0.35	0.27
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		0.15	0.16	0.05
Relative change, 1976-1999		0.61	0.86	0.20



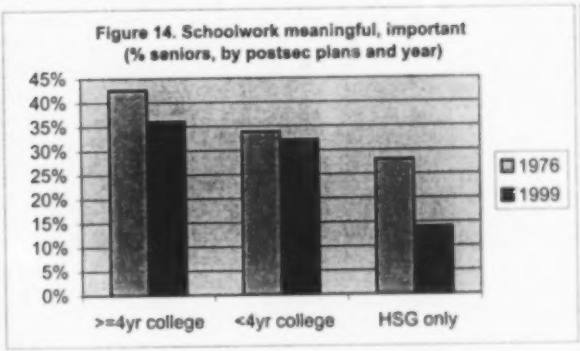


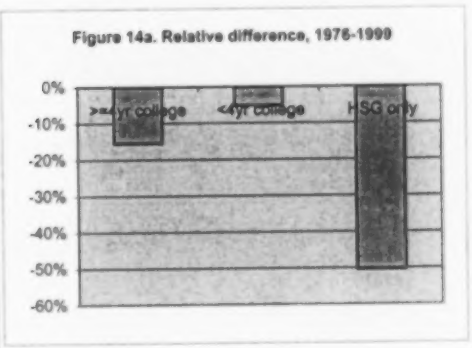
Importance of things you're learning for later life (quite+very important)	1976	0.55	0.48	0.38
	1999	0.44	0.44	0.24
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		-0.11	-0.04	-0.14
Relative difference, 1976-1999		-0.20	-0.08	-0.38



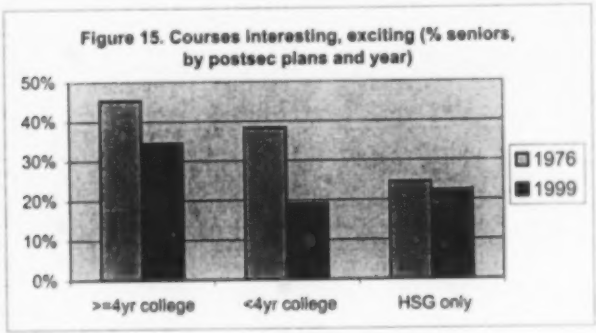


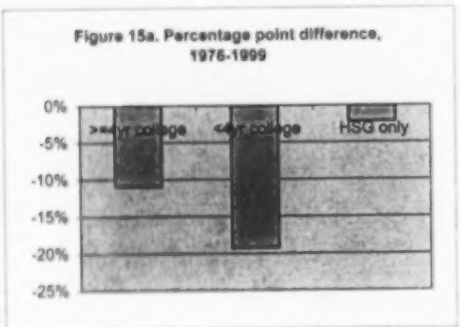
		>=4yr coll	<4yr coll	HSG only
Schoolwork meaningful, important (often+almost always)	1976	0.43	0.34	0.28
	1999	0.36	0.32	0.14
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		-0.07	-0.02	-0.14
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		-0.15	-0.05	-0.50



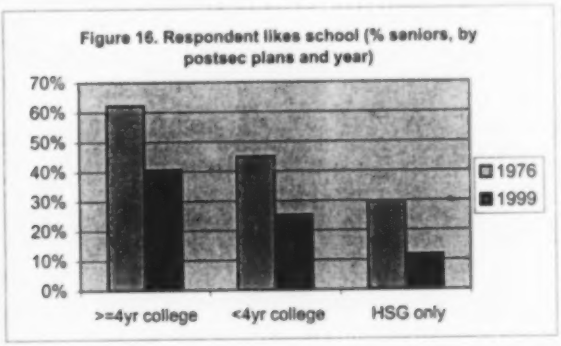


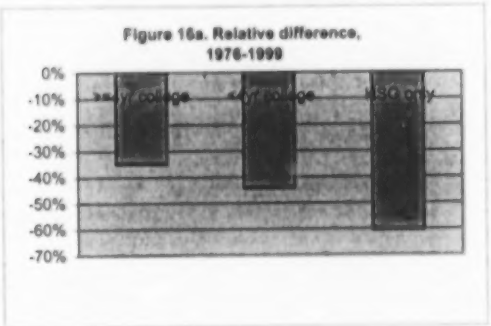
Courses interesting, exciting	1976	0.45	0.38	0.25
	1999	0.34	0.19	0.22
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		-0.11	-0.19	-0.02
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		-0.24	-0.50	-0.09



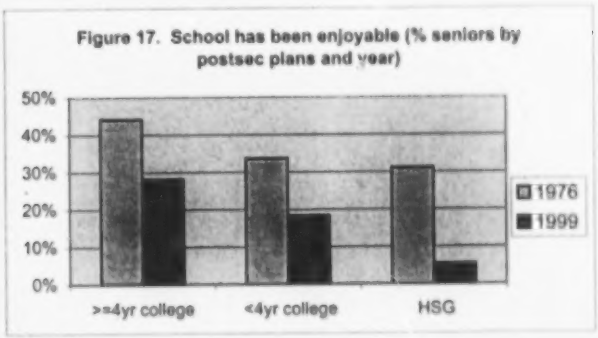


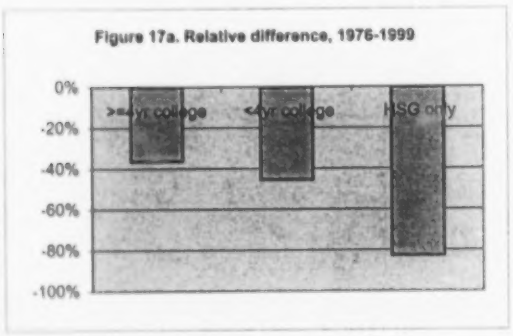
Respondent likes school (a lot+very much)	1976	0.62	0.45	0.29
	1999	0.41	0.25	0.12
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		-0.22	-0.20	-0.18
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		-0.35	-0.44	-0.60



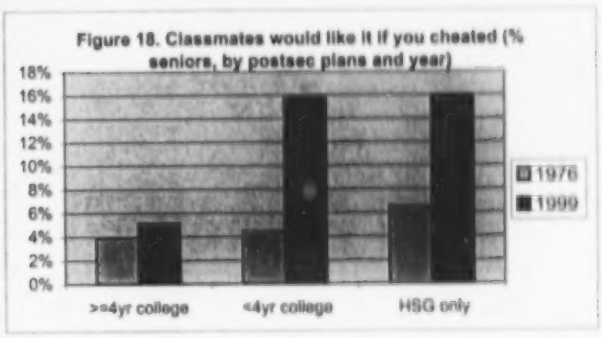


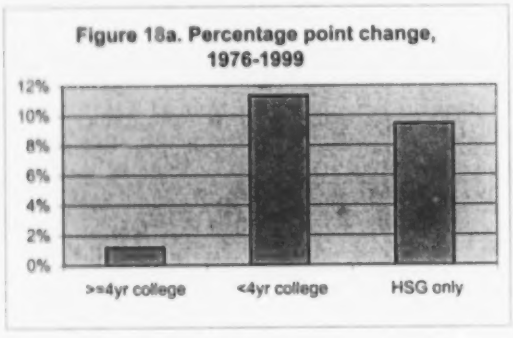
		>=4yr coll	<4yr coll	HSG only
School has been enjoyable (agree)	1976	0.44	0.34	0.31
	1999	0.28	0.18	0.05
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		-0.16	-0.15	-0.26
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		-0.36	-0.45	-0.83



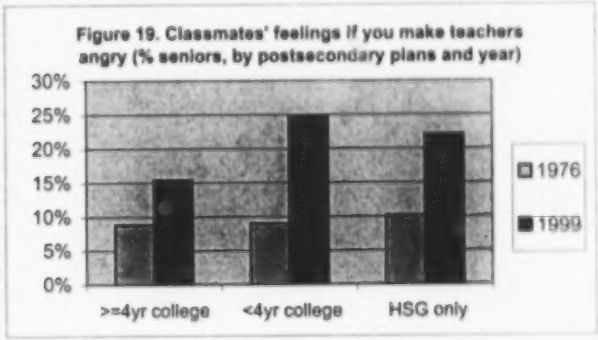


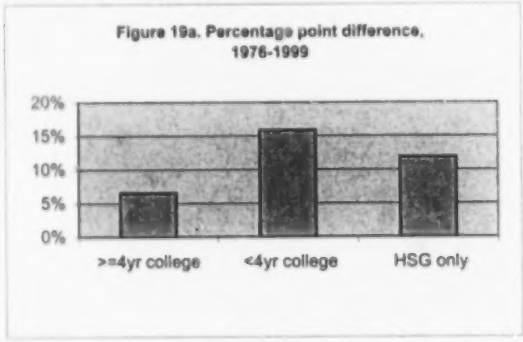
Classmates' feelings if you cheat	1976	0.04	0.04	0.06
(like+like very much)	1999	0.05	0.16	0.16
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		0.01	0.11	0.09
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		0.30	2.56	1.46



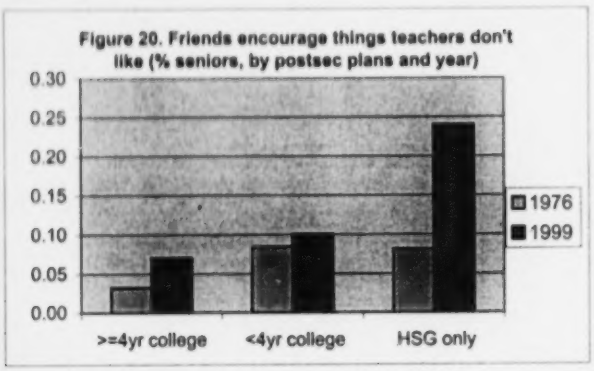


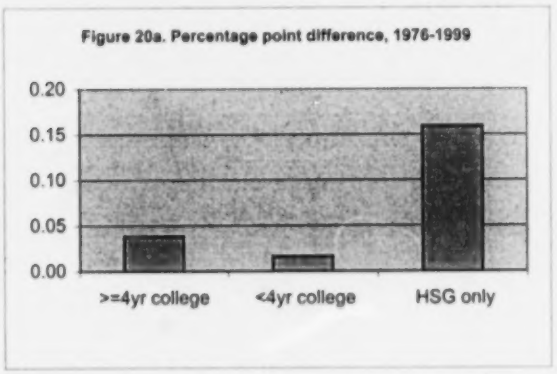
Classmates' feelings if make Ts angry	1976	0.09	0.09	0.10
(like+like very much)	1999	0.15	0.25	0.22
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		0.07	0.16	0.12
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		0.74	1.76	1.17



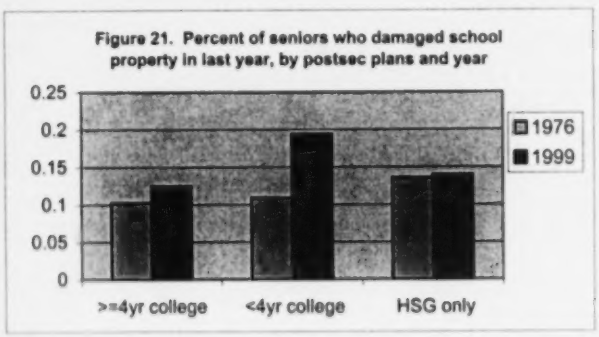


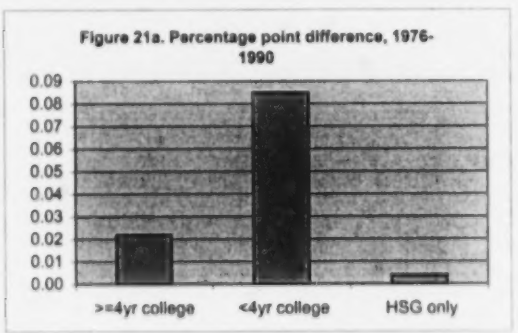
		>=4yr coll	<4yr coll	HSG only
Friends encourage things Ts don't like	1976	0.03	0.08	0.08
(often +always)	1999	0.07	0.10	0.24
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		0.04	0.02	0.16
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		1.18	0.19	1.97





R damaged school property in last 12 months	1976	0.10	0.11	0.14
	1999	0.12	0.19	0.14
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		0.02	0.08	0.00
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		0.21	0.78	0.03

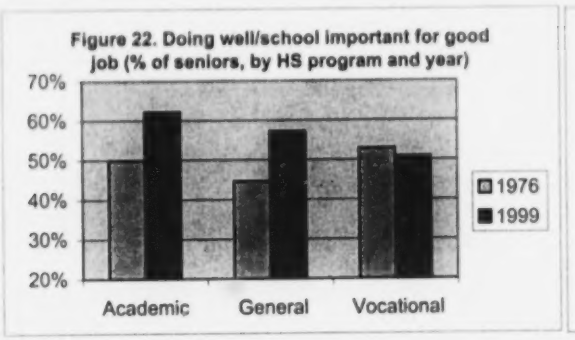


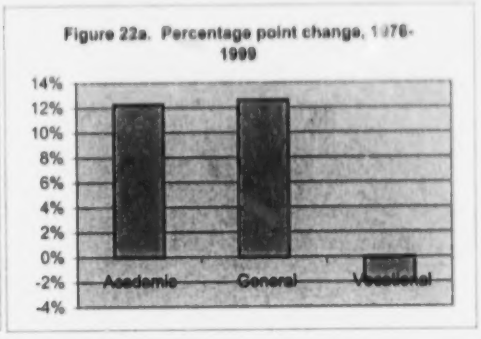


Crosstabs: Student Characteristics by High School Program, Year

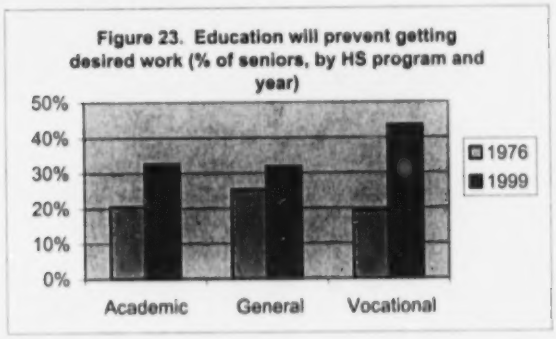
Shaded areas: p<.05

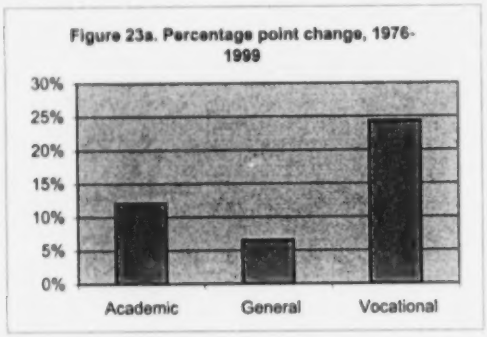
		Academic	General	Vocational
Doing well/school important getting good job	**1976**	0.50	0.45	0.53
(agree)	**1999**	0.62	0.57	0.51
Percentage point change 1976-1999		0.12	0.13	-0.02
Relative change 1976-1999		0.25	0.28	-0.04



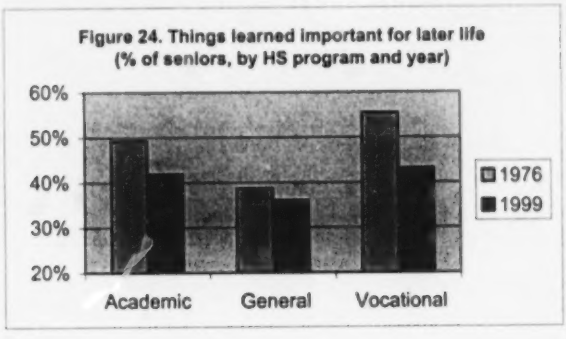


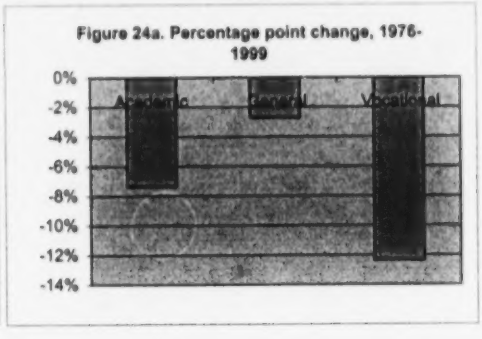
		Academic	General	Vocational
Your education will prevent your getting work you like	**1976**	0.21	0.25	0.19
	1999	0.33	0.32	0.44
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		0.12	0.07	0.24
Relative change, 1976-1999		0.59	0.26	1.26





		Academic	General	Vocational
Importance of things you are learning for later life (quite+very important)	**1976**	0.49	0.39	0.55
	1999	0.42	0.36	0.43
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		-0.07	-0.03	-0.12
Relative change, 1976-1999		-0.15	-0.07	-0.22





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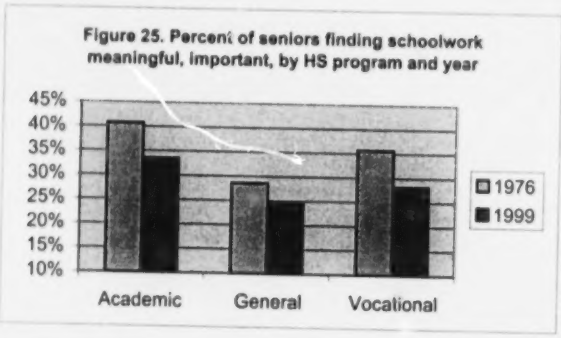
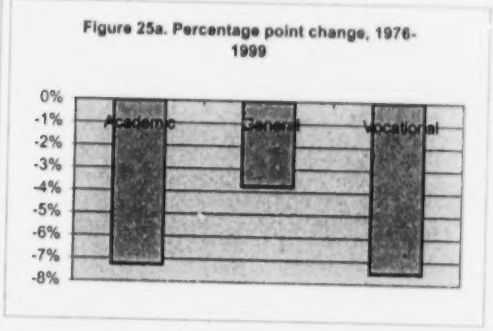
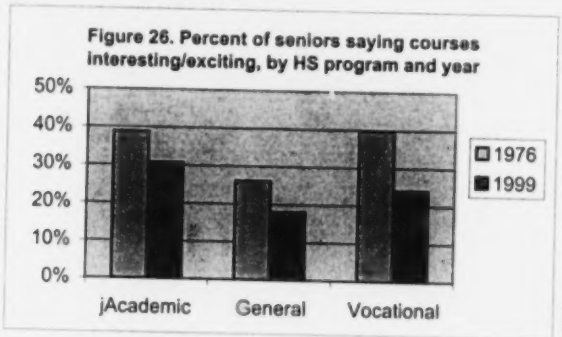
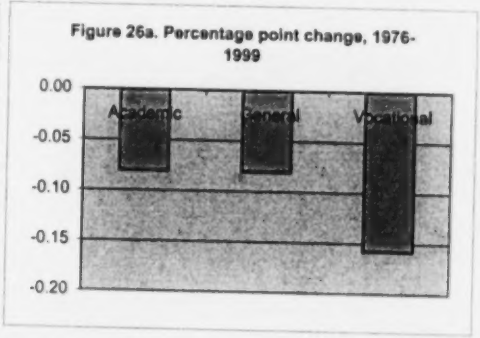
		Academic	General	Vocational
Schoolwork meaningful, important	1976	0.41	0.29	0.36
(often+almost always)	1999	0.33	0.25	0.28
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		-0.07	-0.04	-0.08
% change		-0.18	-0.13	-0.21



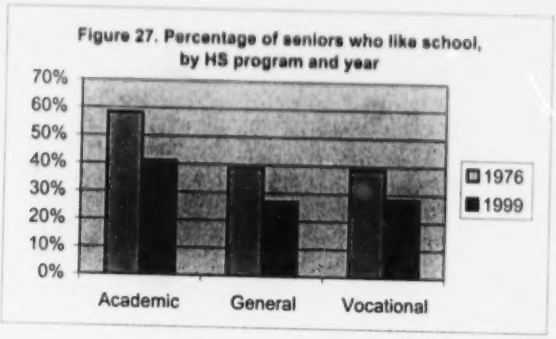


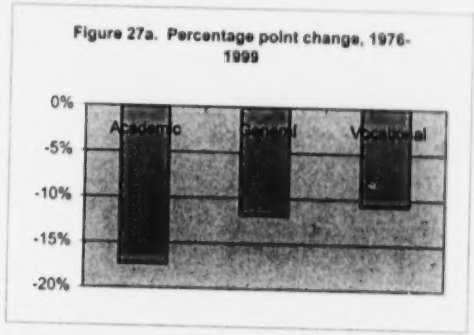
Courses interesting/exciting	1976	0.39	0.26	0.40
	1999	0.31	0.18	0.24
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		-0.08	-0.08	-0.16
Relative change, 1976-1999		-0.21	-0.31	-0.39



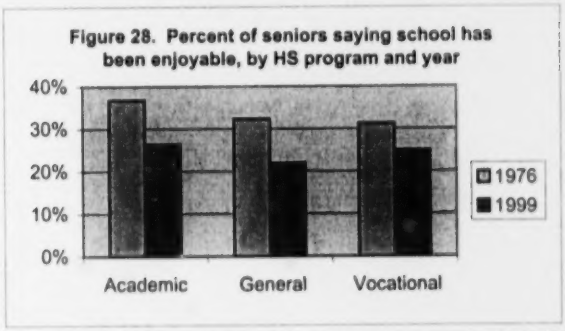


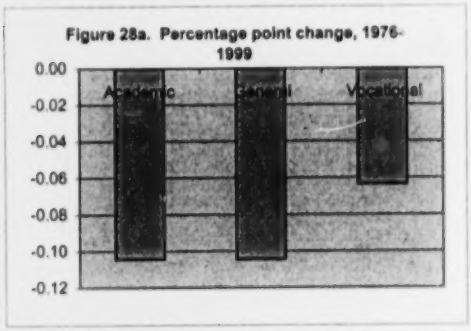
Respondent likes school	1976	0.58	0.39	0.39
(a lot+very much)	1996	0.41	0.27	0.28
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		-0.17	-0.12	-0.11
Relative change, 1976-1999		-0.30	-0.30	-0.28



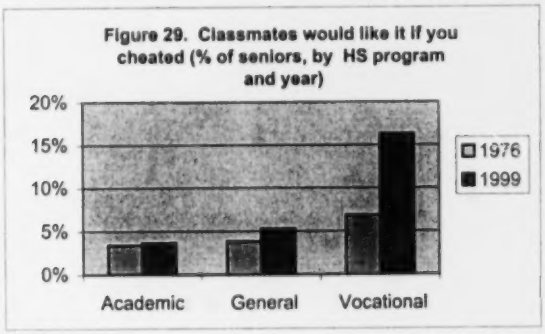


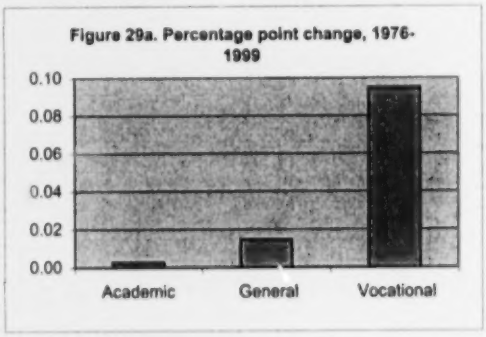
		Academic	General	Vocational
Schoool has been enjoyable	1976	0.37	0.32	0.31
(agree)	1999	0.26	0.22	0.25
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		-0.10	-0.10	-0.06
Relative change, 1976-1999		-0.28	-0.32	-0.20



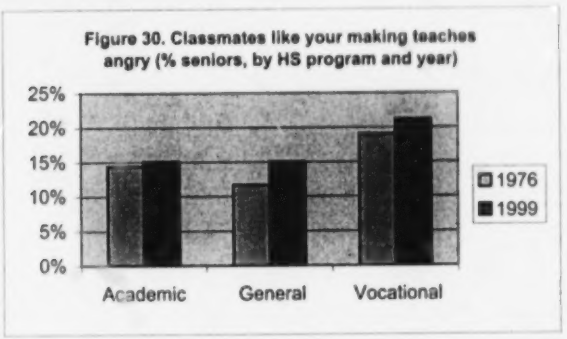


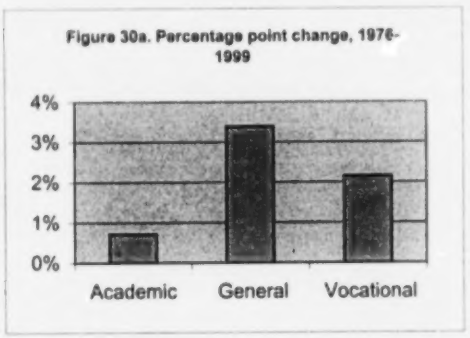
		Academic	General	Vocational
Classmates' feelings if you cheat	1976	0.03	0.04	0.07
(like+like a lot)	1999	0.04	0.05	0.16
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		0.00	0.01	0.09
Relative change, 1976-1999		0.08	0.38	1.39



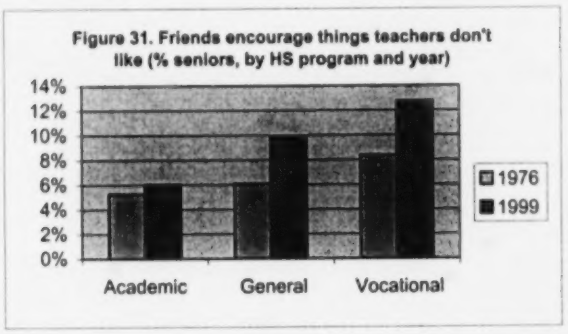


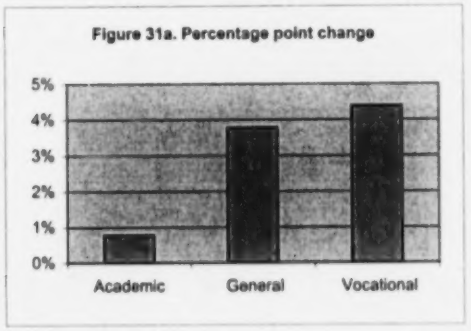
		Academic	General	Vocational
Classmates' feelings if you make Ts angry	1976	0.14	0.12	0.19
(like+like a lot)	1999	0.15	0.15	0.21
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		0.01	0.03	0.02
Relative change, 1976-1999		0.05	0.29	0.11



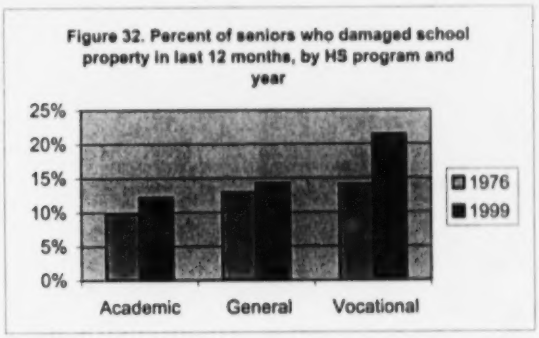


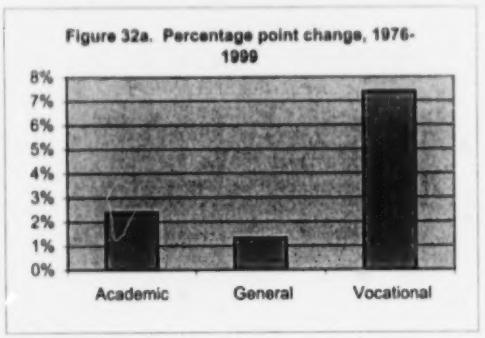
Friends encourage things Ts don't like	1976	0.053	0.061	0.084
(often + always)	1999	0.060	0.099	0.127
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		0.008	0.038	0.044
Relative change, 1976-1999		0.146	0.619	0.525





R damaged school property in last 12 months	1976	0.10	0.13	0.14
	1999	0.12	0.14	0.21
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		0.02	0.01	0.07
Relative change, 1976-1999		0.24	0.10	0.53

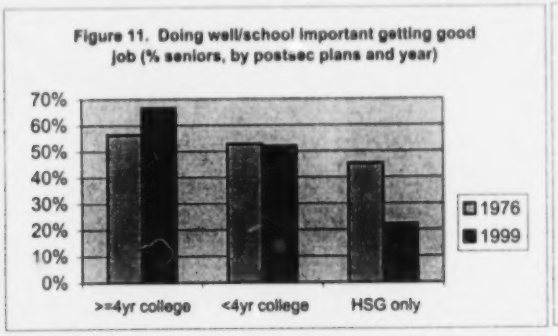


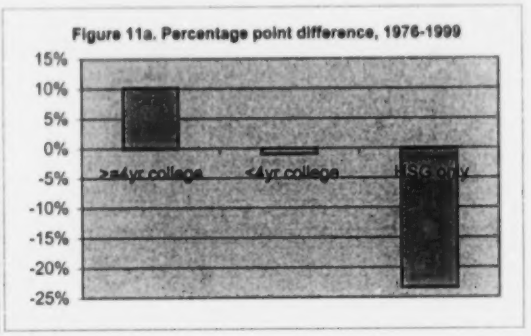


Crosstabs: Senior characteristics by postsecondary plans and year (1976, 1999)

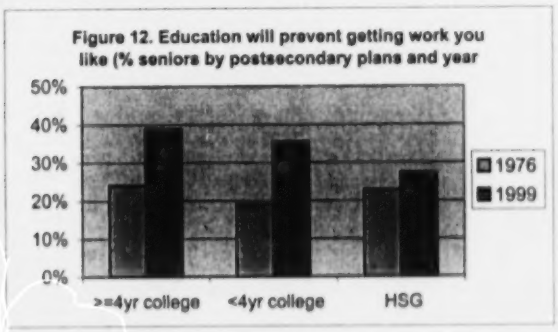
Shaded areas: p<.05

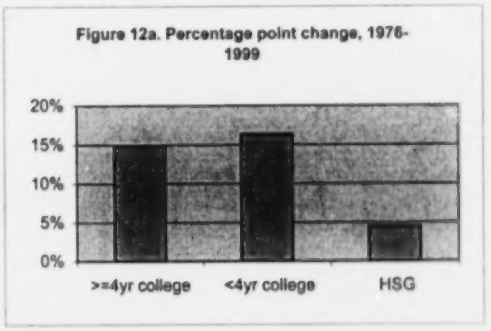
		>=4yr coll	<4yr coll	HSG only
Doing well/school important getting good job (agree)	**1976**	0.56	0.53	0.45
	1999	0.67	0.52	0.22
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		0.10	-0.01	-0.23
Relative difference, 1976-1999		0.18	-0.02	-0.51



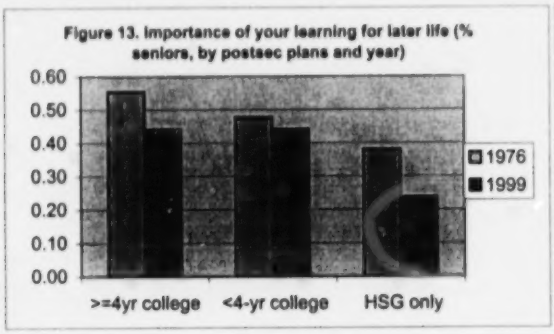


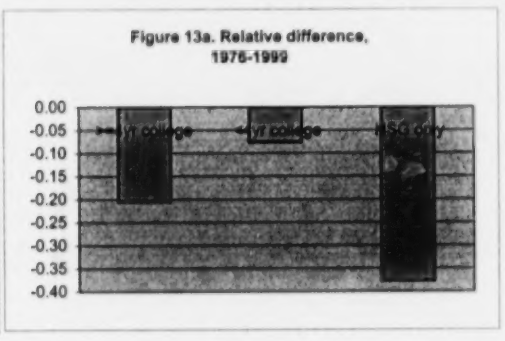
Your education will prevent your getting work you like	**1976**	0.24	0.19	0.23
	1999	0.39	0.35	0.27
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		0.15	0.16	0.05
Relative change, 1976-1999		0.61	0.86	0.20



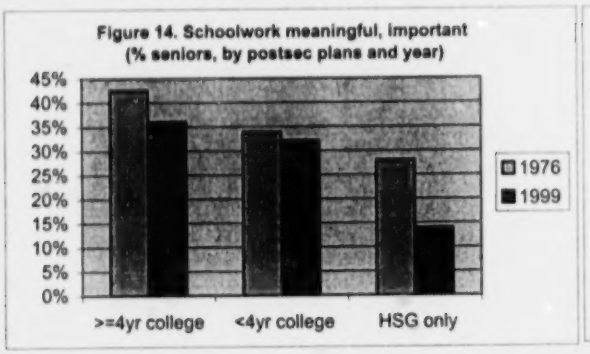


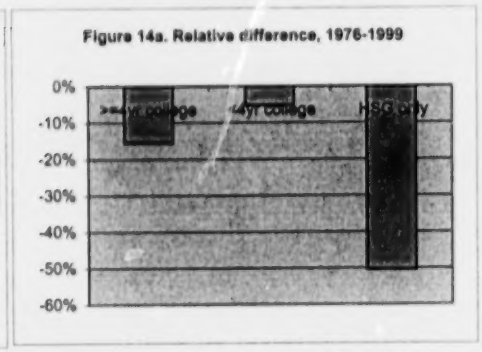
Importance of things you're learning for later life (quite+very important)	1976	0.55	0.48	0.38
	1999	0.44	0.44	0.24
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		-0.11	-0.04	-0.14
Relative difference, 1976-1999		-0.20	-0.08	-0.38



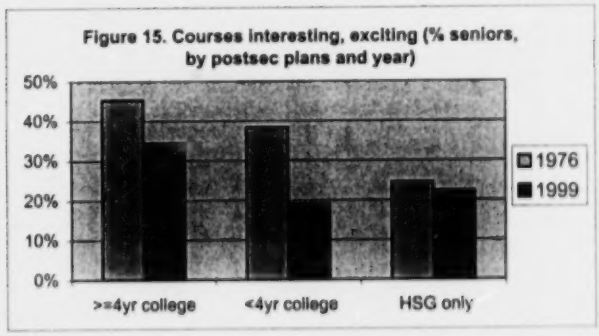


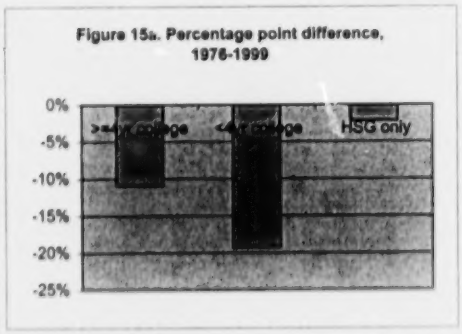
		>=4yr coll	<4yr coll	HSG only
Schoolwork meaningful, important	1976	0.43	0.34	0.28
(often+almost always)	1999	0.36	0.32	0.14
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		-0.07	-0.02	-0.14
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		-0.15	-0.05	-0.50



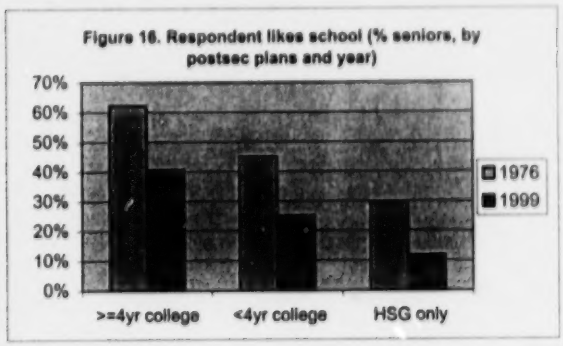


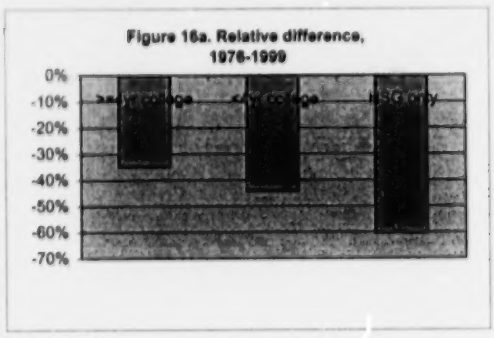
Courses interesting, exciting	**1976**	0.45	0.38	0.25
	1999	0.34	0.19	0.22
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		-0.11	-0.19	-0.02
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		-0.24	-0.50	-0.09





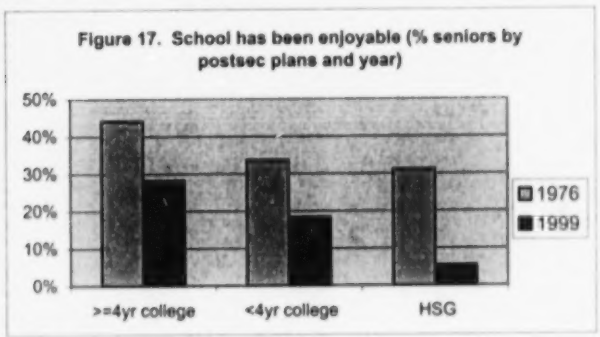
Respondent likes school (a lot+very much)	1976	0.62	0.45	0.29
	1999	0.41	0.25	0.12
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		-0.22	-0.20	-0.18
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		-0.35	-0.44	-0.60

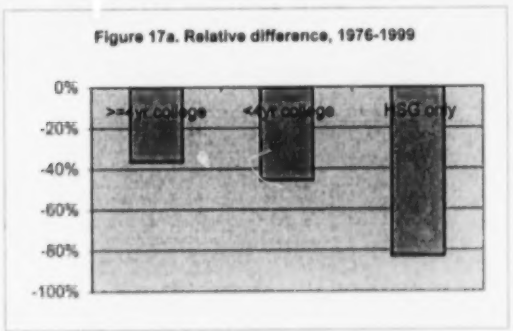




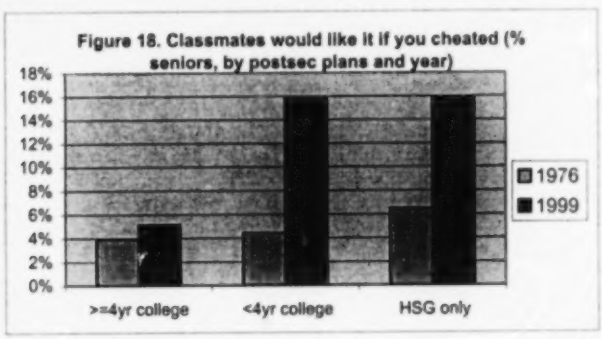
>=4yr college	<4yr college	HSG only

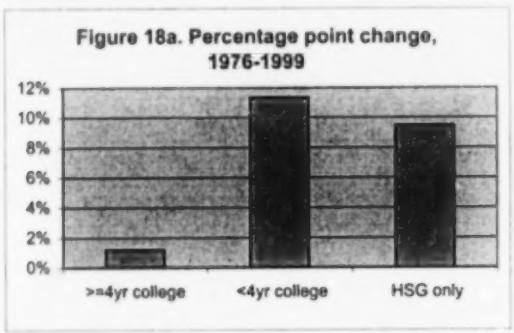
		>=4yr coll	<4yr coll	HSG only
School has been enjoyable (agree)	1976	0.44	0.34	0.31
	1999	0.28	0.18	0.05
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		-0.16	-0.15	-0.26
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		-0.36	-0.45	-0.83



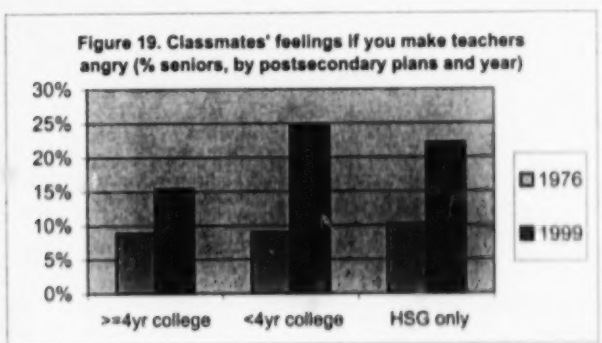


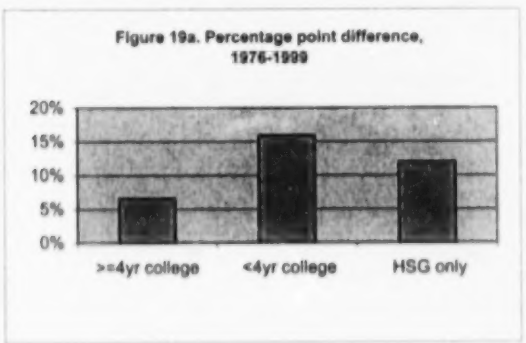
Classmates' feelings if you cheat	1976	0.04	0.04	0.06
(like+like very much)	1999	0.05	0.16	0.16
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		0.01	0.11	0.09
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		0.30	2.56	1.46



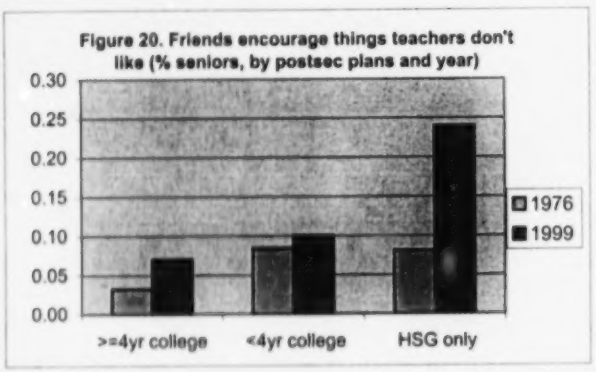


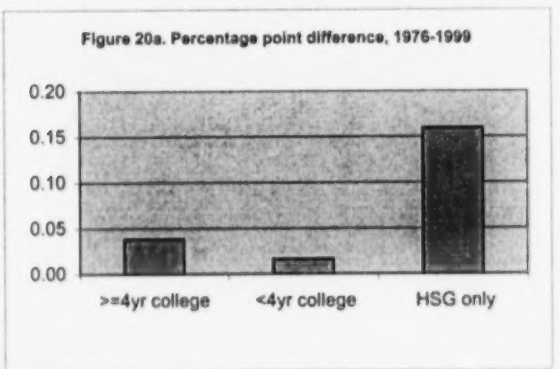
Classmates' feelings if make Ts angry	1976	0.09	0.09	0.10
(like+like very much)	1999	0.15	0.25	0.22
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		0.07	0.16	0.12
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		0.74	1.76	1.17



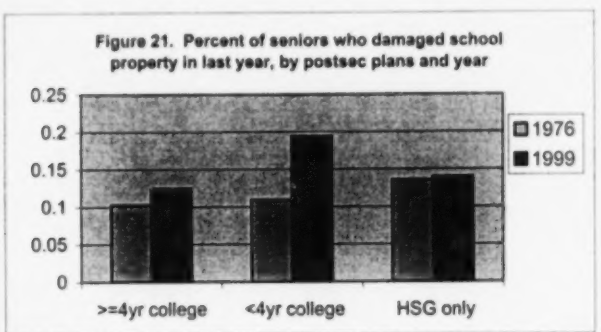


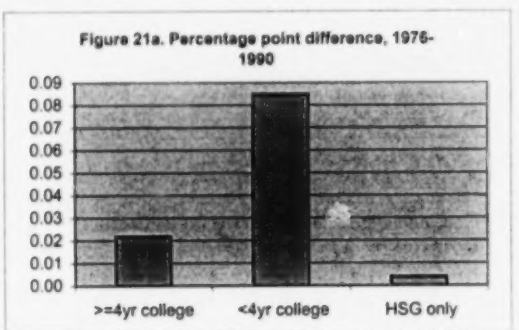
		>=4yr coll	<4yr coll	HSG only
Friends encourage things Ts don't like	1976	0.03	0.08	0.08
(often +always)	1999	0.07	0.10	0.24
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		0.04	0.02	0.16
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		1.18	0.19	1.97





R damaged school property in last 12 months	1976	0.10	0.11	0.14
	1999	0.12	0.19	0.14
Percentage point difference, 1976-1999		0.02	0.08	0.00
Relative diffference, 1976-1999		0.21	0.78	0.03

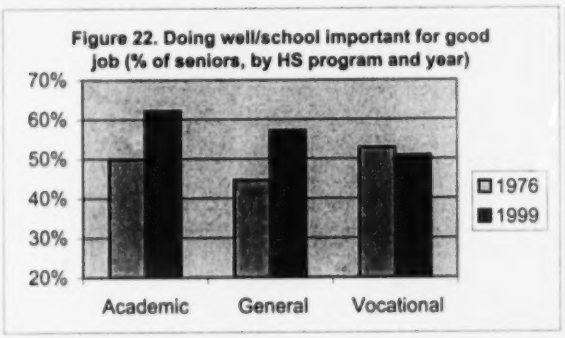


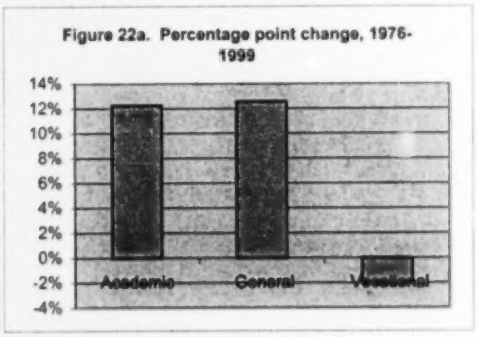


Crosstabs: Student Characteristics by High School Program, Year

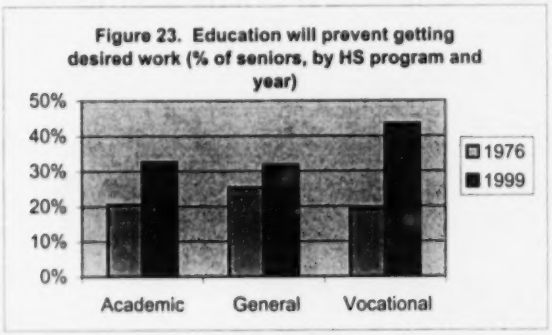
Shaded areas: p<.05

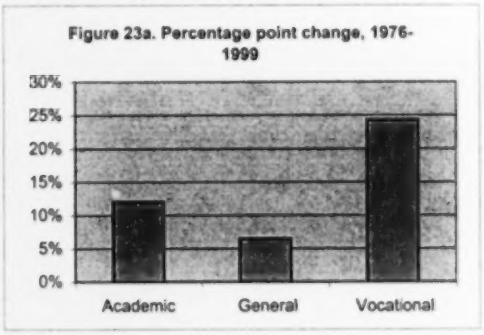
		Academic	General	Vocational
Doing well/school important getting good job	1976	0.50	0.45	0.53
(agree)	1999	0.62	0.57	0.51
Percentage point change 1976-1999		0.12	0.13	-0.02
Relative change 1976-1999		0.25	0.28	-0.04



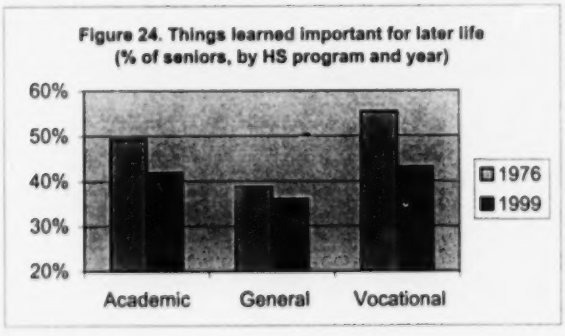


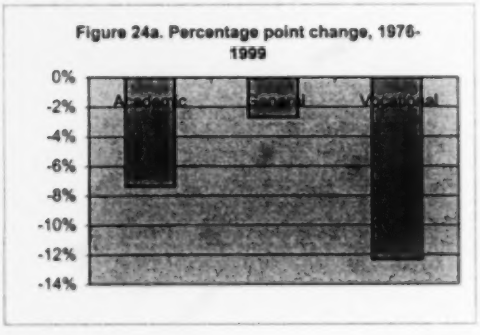
		Academic	General	Vocational
Your education will prevent your getting work you like	1976	0.21	0.25	0.19
	1999	0.33	0.32	0.44
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		0.12	0.07	0.24
Relative change, 1976-1999		0.59	0.26	1.26



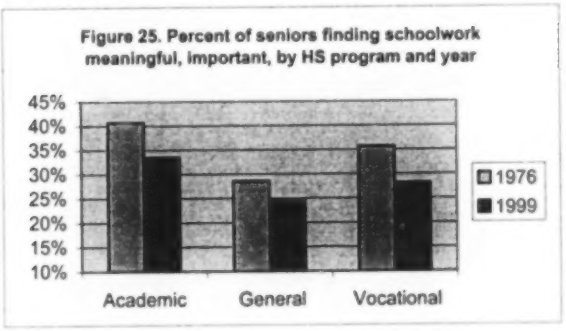


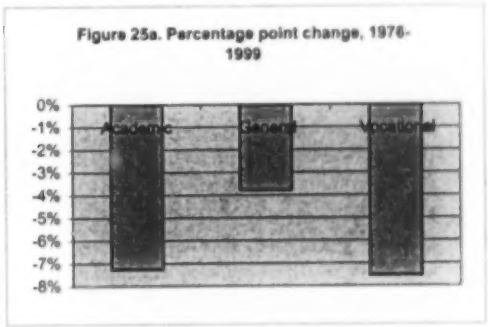
		Academic	General	Vocational
Importance of things you are learning for later life (quite+very important)	1976	0.49	0.39	0.55
	1999	0.42	0.36	0.43
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		-0.07	-0.03	-0.12
Relative change, 1976-1999		-0.15	-0.07	-0.22



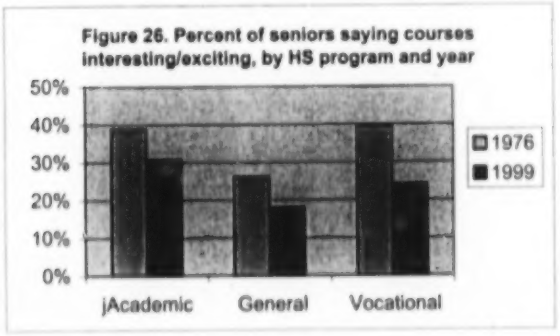


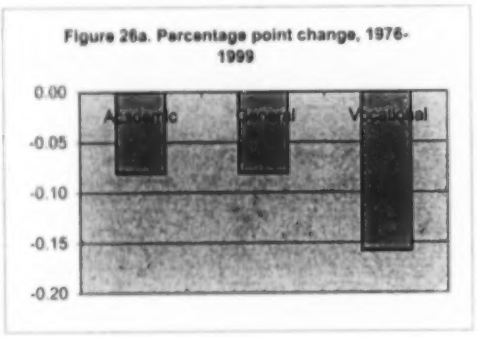
		Academic	General	Vocational
Schoolwork meaningful, important	1976	0.41	0.29	0.36
(often+almost always)	1999	0.33	0.25	0.28
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		-0.07	-0.04	-0.08
% change		-0.18	-0.13	-0.21



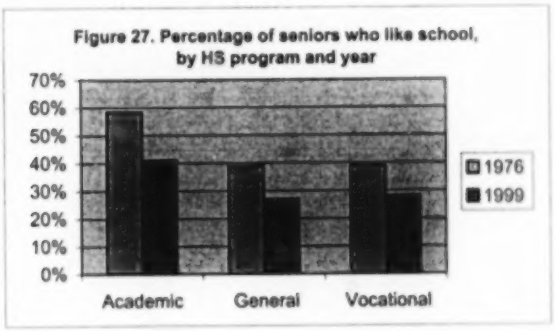


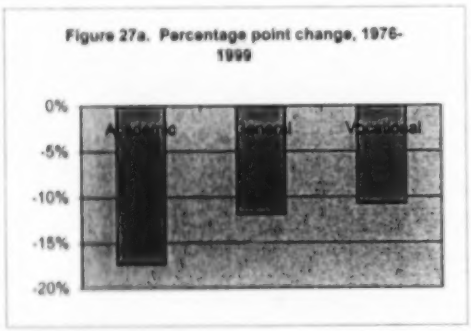
Courses interesting/exciting	1976	0.39	0.26	0.40
	1999	0.31	0.18	0.24
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		-0.08	-0.08	-0.16
Relative change, 1976-1999		-0.21	-0.31	-0.39





Respondent likes school	1976	0.58	0.39	0.39
(a lot+very much)	1996	0.41	0.27	0.28
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		-0.17	-0.12	-0.11
Relative change, 1976-1999		-0.30	-0.30	-0.28





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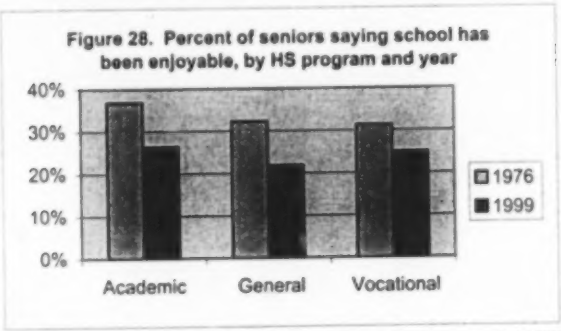
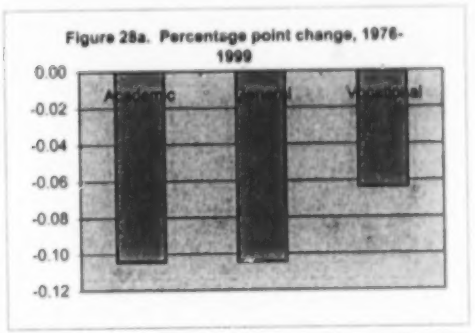
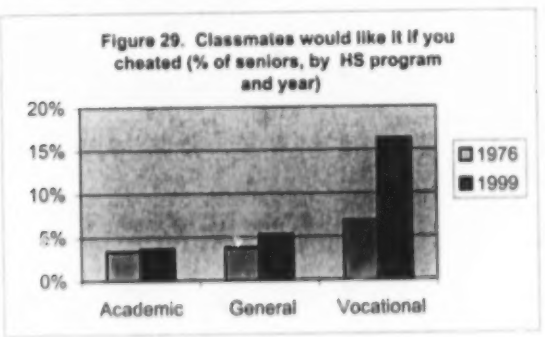
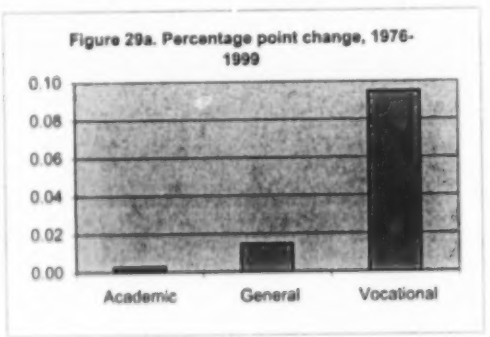
		Academic	General	Vocational
School has been enjoyable	1976	0.37	0.32	0.31
(agree)	1999	0.26	0.22	0.25
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		-0.10	-0.10	-0.06
Relative change, 1976-1999		-0.28	-0.32	-0.20



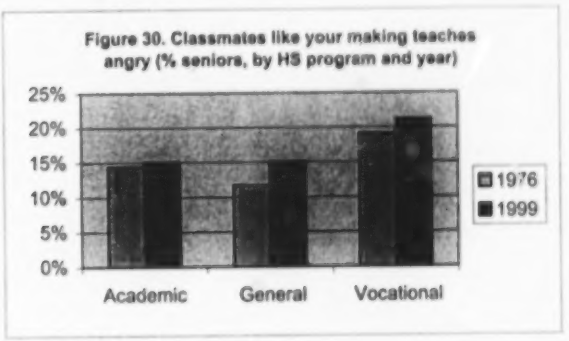


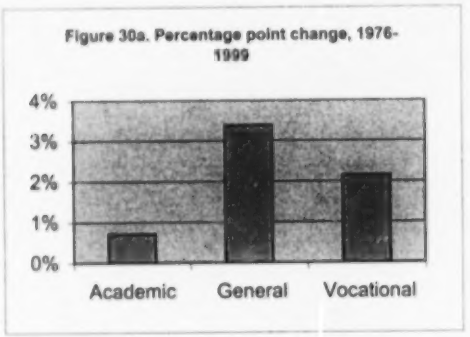
		Academic	General	Vocational
Classmates' feelings if you cheat	1976	0.03	0.04	0.07
(like+like a lot)	1999	0.04	0.05	0.16
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		0.00	0.01	0.09
Relative change, 1976-1999		0.08	0.38	1.39



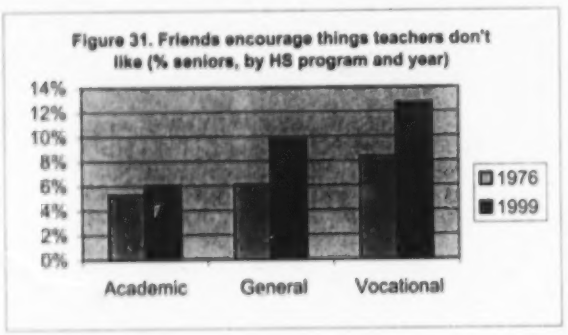


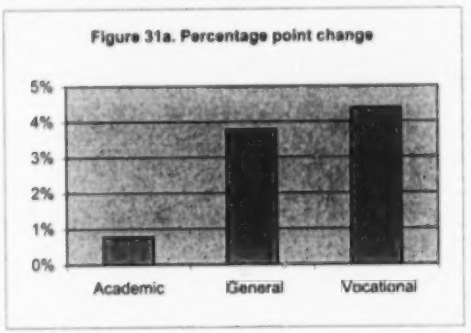
		Academic	General	Vocational
Classmates' feelings if you make Ts angry	1976	0.14	0.12	0.19
(like+like a lot)	1999	0.15	0.15	0.21
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		0.01	0.03	0.02
Relative change, 1976-1999		0.05	0.29	0.11





		Academic	General	Vocational
Friends encourage things Ts don't like	1976	0.053	0.061	0.084
(often + always)	1999	0.060	0.099	0.127
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		0.008	0.038	0.044
Relative change, 1976-1999		0.146	0.619	0.525





		Academic	General	Vocational
R damaged school property in last 12 months	1976	0.10	0.13	0.14
	1999	0.12	0.14	0.21
Percentage point change, 1976-1999		0.02	0.01	0.07
Relative change, 1976-1999		0.24	0.10	0.53